

**Testimony of Thomas C. Bailey
on H.B. 5414
Michigan House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation
13 March, 2012**

I am Thomas C. Bailey, and my profession is Executive Director of the Little Traverse Conservancy in Harbor Springs. I am honored to serve as a member of Governor Snyder's Blue Ribbon Panel on Michigan State Parks and Outdoor Recreation, and I am an enthusiastic supporter of HB 5414, which would include state land in Emmet County's townships of Bliss, Cross Village and Wawatam under Michigan's Dark Sky Preserve statute.

I support this initiative because it represents positive gains in all its dimensions for northern Emmet County in terms of quality of life for residents and visitors; economic development; and bringing people into touch with nature in a new and innovative way.

By way of background, the quality of night sky viewing in the northern Lower Peninsula has attracted a great deal of attention since Emmet County's park at the Headlands was recognized by the International Dark-Sky Association as the sixth International Dark Sky Park in the United States, and ninth in all the world. And while we knew that people would respond to this new designation with interest in area and the series of interpretive programs being offered at the Headlands, we were not prepared for the extent of the response that we received.

People have traveled from across Michigan and out of state for every one of the programs presented at the Headlands. Groups of international exchange students have visited. A committee of the International Astronomers Union based in South Africa has inquired about holding their international conference in the area. Hotel reservations are being made around the time of celestial events a year in advance. Thus, the new recognition being given to the night sky in the North is not only a wonderful scenic, scientific and cultural boon to the area, it offers significant potential for economic development with literally no negative side effects.

HB 5414 will help Emmet County to expand from having a Dark Sky Park to an entire Dark Sky Coast. Thanks to the foresight of those who have managed our public land resources in the area, we have a ready-made opportunity for appreciating the night sky on some 21,000 acres of public land including some 16 miles of shoreline on Lake Michigan and the Straits of Mackinaw. The views are spectacular, and the legislation will enable us to involve greater numbers of people in night sky activities. It will allow us to incorporate more of the night sky resource into our economic development, as well. Significantly, it will bring Wilderness State Park into Michigan's Dark Sky Preserve Program, opening up an entirely new dimension for interpretive materials and programs.

Recall that Michigan was the first state to adopt a statewide standard for Dark Sky Preserves—another example of our state's leadership in conservation and the environment. HB 5414 will help us to remain in a leadership position among the states. This bill simply applies the previously established standards for Dark Sky Preserves to the DNR-administered public land in northern Emmet County. As I mentioned, the three Townships and the County have given their unanimous approval to the measure.

As you will learn from other witnesses at this hearing, one of the unique features of the programming at the Headlands International Dark Sky Park is that it does not require telescopes or technology, and it is not only about science. Though science is certainly a wonderful way to look at the night sky, the approach taken by Emmet County in its programming is to emphasize night sky

viewing with the unaided eye, emphasizing stories about constellations, myths about the relationships of people to the stars, and other star connections. All of their programming and materials follow this theme. The star lore of Native People, as well as popular myths and stories from Greek, Roman, Egyptian and other cultures are all explored, and these activities will be enhanced by the adoption of HB 5414 and creation of the Dark Sky Coast. The proto-science of astrology can also be explored and explained here, as we focus in dozens of different ways on the relationship of people to the night sky throughout human history. As Headlands Program Director Mary Stewart Adams has observed, "it doesn't matter whether your attention to the starry skies is focused through a telescope or a horoscope."

Thus, in the Straits area where there is already a wonderful historic legacy and a number of great park resources for relating the history and culture of the Native, French, British and American people in the area, we can now weave in the night sky and its associated culture, history, folklore and science.

I urge adoption of HB 5414 for the benefit of not only our part of northern Michigan, but also to put our state on the map as a "Dark Sky Destination" from people from around the nation and literally around the world.

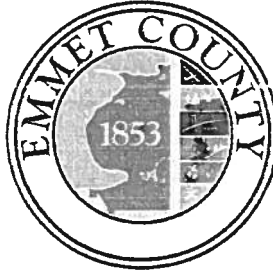
Thank you for your time and attention, and thank you for your consideration of HB 5414 which will tell the world that a beautiful, unhindered view of the night sky is an important part of the experience of Pure Michigan.

I will be happy to answer any questions you might have, or to provide further information that will be helpful to you. For the record, I will provide you with copies of a recent column that I wrote for the Little Traverse Conservancy's quarterly newsletter.

ATTACHMENTS:

Resolutions from Emmet County and the townships of Bliss, Cross Village, and Wawatam

Column from Little Traverse Conservancy Newsletter, Fall, 2011



Emmet County, 200 Division St., Petoskey, Mich., 49770

Resolution: In support of Dark Sky Preserve Designation for Wilderness State Park and Surrounding State Forest Land as the 'Dark Sky Coast'

Emmet County Board of Commissioners, January 26, 2012

Whereas, in May 2011 Emmet County's park at the Headlands became the 6th International Dark Sky Park in the United States and the 9th in the world, and

Whereas nearby Wilderness State Park and additional State forest lands stretching from Wycamp Lake to French Farm Lake also present pristine, undiluted night sky viewing opportunities, and

Whereas the night sky represents an important natural resource that contributes to the quality of life for residents, visitors and wildlife in Northern Emmet County, and

Whereas the Dark Sky Park and related activities represent a significant opportunity for economic development region- and statewide, and

Whereas the above-mentioned parks and land along the Lake Michigan shoreline in the northwest section of Emmet County lend themselves to inclusion in the state's Dark Sky Preserve Legislation, and

Whereas the Townships of Bliss, Cross Village and Wawatam have been consulted and have unanimously approved resolutions with no objection to classifications of state lands in their jurisdictions as Dark Sky Preserve for creation of Michigan's "Dark Sky Coast,"

Therefore be it resolved that the Emmet County Board of Commissioners supports the creation of a "Dark Sky Coast" in Northern Emmet County that includes the Headlands, Wilderness State Park and surrounding state forest land under Michigan's Dark Sky Preserve legislation, and further be it resolved that the Emmet County Board of Commissioners calls upon our State Representative and State Senator to introduce and support legislation that will secure this designation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "James E. Tamlyn".

James E. Tamlyn

Chairman, Emmet County Board of Commissioners

Township of Bliss
Resolution on Dark Sky Preserve Designation
For Wilderness State Park and Surrounding State Forest Land

WHEREAS:

- Northern Emmet County is home to the 6th International Dark Sky Park in the United States and 9th in the world at the Headlands, and
- Conditions across northern Emmet County are ideal for night sky viewing, and
- Wilderness State Park and surrounding state forest land in Bliss Township lend themselves to inclusions in the state's Dark Sky Preserve legislation, and
- The night sky represents a significant natural resource that contributes to the quality of life for residents and visitors alike in Bliss Township, be it therefore

RESOLVED:

- That the Township registers no objection to inclusion of Wilderness State Park and surrounding state forest land under Michigan's Dark Sky Preserve legislation.

APPROVED this 8th day of November, 2011

Doris Galtichor

Township Clerk

**Township of Cross Village
Resolution on Dark Sky Preserve Designation
For Wilderness State Park and Surrounding State Forest Land**

WHEREAS:

- Cross Village Township in northern Emmet County is near the 6th International Dark Sky Park in the United States and 9th in the world at the Headlands, and
- Conditions across northern Emmet County are ideal for night sky viewing, and
- State Forest lands surrounding Wycamp Lake and elsewhere in Cross Village Township lend themselves to inclusions in the state's Dark Sky Preserve legislation, and
- The night sky represents a significant natural resource that contributes to the quality of life for residents and visitors alike in Cross Village Township, be it therefore

RESOLVED:

- That the Township registers no objection to inclusion of Wilderness State Park and surrounding state forest land under Michigan's Dark Sky Preserve legislation.

APPROVED this 3rd day of January, 2012

Spellen M. Keller - Deputy Clerk Cross Village

Township Clerk

Good Luck! 😊

**Township of Wawatam
Resolution on Dark Sky Preserve Designation
For Wilderness State Park and Surrounding State Forest Land**

WHEREAS:

- Wawatam Township in northern Emmet County is home to the 6th International Dark Sky Park in the United States and 9th in the world at the Headlands, and
- Conditions across northern Emmet County are ideal for night sky viewing, and
- State Forest lands surrounding French Farm Lake and elsewhere in Wawatam Township lend themselves to inclusions in the state's Dark Sky Preserve legislation, and
- The night sky represents a significant natural resource that contributes to the quality of life for residents and visitors alike in Wawatam Township, be it therefore

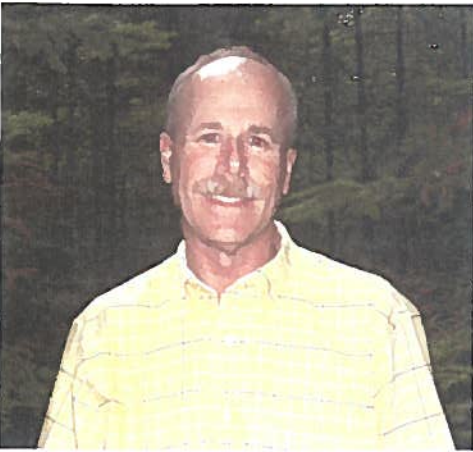
RESOLVED:

- That the Township registers no objection to inclusion of Wilderness State Park and surrounding state forest land under Michigan's Dark Sky Preserve legislation.

APPROVED this 13th day of DECEMBER, 2011

Grace Murt

Township Clerk



Reflections

...Tom Bailey

The Ultimate Wilderness

What if I told you that, wherever you live, you are at most within a few minutes' drive of being able to peer into one of the most vast and beautiful wilderness areas people have ever seen? What if I told you that this great wild place has had only a few dozen human visitors in all of recorded history, and that it appears the same before our eyes today as it did to our ancestors hundreds and even thousands of years ago? And what if I also told you that this is the very same wilderness that has inspired and illustrated the myths and legends of virtually every culture the world has ever known? Would you be inclined to take a few minutes and have a look for yourself? Would you say that it is important for all of us to protect the view of this wonderful place so that future generations can experience the same sense of awe and wonder that inspired our ancestors and can still inspire us all today? Are you curious about exactly where this beautiful, wonder-filled place can be found? If you answered yes to any of those questions, welcome to the ranks of people who are taking a new look at an old familiar friend: the night sky.

It's all there, free for the viewing: constellations, vast spaces, beautiful lights, twinkling colors and endless wonder. The steadiness of the stars in their places, the slow wandering of

the planets through the heavens. The occasional visits of comets and the breathtaking spectacle of shooting stars. Moonrise and moonset, the ethereal dance of the Northern Lights, and the mystical glow of things like noctiluminous clouds. Galaxies, nebulae, and other worlds. Up There, we can see all of the Great Dramas that have played out in our history and mythology: from the Greek and Roman myths many of us studied in school to the Norse legends, African tales, and American Indian stories that address the Big Questions about who we are and why we're here. No admission charged and no telescope required.

The Conservancy has a special connection to night sky viewing through Emmet County's Headlands park, acquired with assistance from the Conservancy, which holds a conservation easement on the land. The Headlands has been designated as the sixth International Dark Sky Park in the United States, and the ninth the world. In part a tribute to the work of the late Gary Williams, who served a number of years on the Conservancy's Board of Trustees, the Dark Sky Park also owes its gratitude to Mary Stewart Adams, who for the past decade has championed the cause of what one might call "dark sky conservation" in the North and now serves as Program Director for the Headlands on behalf of Emmet County.

A key feature of the International Dark Sky Park is control of stray light or "light pollution" from surrounding areas. Many northern Michigan communities, businesses and residents are discovering that traditional outdoor lighting often casts so much glare that one can barely see the stars at night. But there are relatively easy fixes for this that provide adequate illumination while not interfering with the beauty of the night sky. Conservancy Trustee Dave Kring won an award from the regional Outdoor Lighting Forum for the excellent job on lighting at his auto dealership that illuminates the building and cars without obliterating the view of the moon, stars and planets whirling overhead. The town of Elk Rapids won a similar award after it refitted its street lighting to protect the night sky view, and as this issue goes to press the Village of Mackinaw City is embarking

on a similar project. Importantly, these lighting improvement projects also produced significant energy cost savings as a bonus.

What a wonderful thing this is! Just as the Conservancy works to keep the beauty of natural land close at hand, thanks to Gary's vision and Mary's inspiration and leadership, the people of our area are working together to keep the glorious beauty of the night sky close at hand as well.

Part of the beauty of the night sky is that it represents so many things to us. William Shatner famously declared it "the final frontier," and the sky can inspire us as can remnants of the American Frontier in places like our great National Parks. In the Space Age, we can look directly at Space itself — and the wonders that occupy it. We can contemplate vast distances, scientific theories, and technological wonders. It's all connected in our heritage. The ancient art of astrology, we must remember, was the forerunner of what became the science of astronomy. It was the starry sky that most inspired our ancestors when they contemplated their place on the Earth and in Creation. These same stars have been dreamed of, sung about, worshiped, sought after and wished upon throughout the entire existence of humankind. To protect the night sky is to have not only a vast wilderness area but also a museum of science, mythology and human culture before us every cloudless night.

As Mary so eloquently says, "It doesn't matter whether your attention to the starry skies is focused through a telescope or a horoscope." We are all linked to the night sky, and the night sky is an important part of what links us to one another.

In the age of computers, smart phones, HDTV, and an expression called "screen time" to define the hours we spend before electronic devices, it's good to know that people are working to protect the view of the night sky so that it is possible to head outside, look up, and experience the primal wonder of the vastness of the heavens. No telescope required. No electrical outlet or device. Just one's self, perhaps a companion or family, and the beauty and wonder of the Ultimate Wilderness, the night sky above us.

